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THE ENGLISH CONFERENCE¹

The conference met at New York University on May 31 and June 1. All the delegates were present except Mr. Thurber, of Boston. At the first meeting Professor Stoddard was elected chairman, and Professor Cook, secretary. A number of prominent educators had been invited to address the conference and to make suggestions in regard to its work. Among those who spoke were Professors Davison, Jones, and Mott, of the Regents' Office; Professor Baker, of the Teachers' College; Principal Douglass and Superintendent Maxwell, of Brooklyn, and Assistant Superintendent Marble, of New York City. Some serious criticisms were made of the present system, and many valuable suggestions were given. The speakers were nearly unanimous in the opinion that there should be no difference between the regular and college-preparatory courses in English, and a number demanded that a permanent list of books be established which should remain unchanged for periods ranging from two to ten years.

At the subsequent meeting two distinct plans were presented for consideration. Professor Briggs, of Harvard, discussed a scheme which had been prepared by the English department of that institution. It proposed to make no radical change in existing requirements, but would grade and expand the present reading course and change the list materially. The second plan was introduced and advocated by Mr. French, of Chicago, and was outlined by the following resolutions:

RESOLUTIONS RELATING TO COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS IN ENGLISH

WHEREAS, The present system of college requirements in English is meeting with serious objection from various quarters on account of its narrowness and lack of elasticity and adaptability to the varying conditions existent

¹ For list of members of the Conference see p. 367.

in the wide range of preparatory schools in which it must form an important part of the curriculum; therefore be it

Resolved, (1) That this conference recommends that the requirements in English as at present prescribed by the leading colleges of the country be abandoned; and

Resolved, (2) That in the opinion of this conference there should be no difference between the regular courses and the college-preparatory courses in English in secondary schools; and

Resolved, (3) That this conference recommends that the following system, which is characterized by greater elasticity and adaptability than the old, be adopted in its stead:

I. The college requirements in English shall be so construed as to require four years for their completion.

II. The work of preparation in English shall be distributed through the four years as follows:

First year.—(a) For study: The fundamental principles of practical rhetoric and composition, with illustrative exercises and essays. (b) For reading: Five (5) representative books by American authors.

Second year.—(a) For study: (1) Short history of the English language, *e. g.*, Emerson or Champneys; (2) three selected books to be studied intensively with reference to motive, style, and content, with essays, reviews, or criticisms. (b) For reading: Five selected books to be read at home and reported upon in class.

Third year.—(a) For study: (1) The development of English thought and literature to 1603; (2) three books as before. (b) For reading: Five books as before.

Fourth year.—(a) For study: (1) The development of English thought and literature from 1603 to the present time, with special attention to the Victorian age; (2) three books as before. (b) For reading: Five books as before.

Resolved, (4) That a graded list of not less than 150 books be prepared and presented to preparatory schools, from which they may make their own selections, provided that no student be allowed to present a list of which more than one-third shall be fiction and more than one-third poetry and drama.

Resolved, (5) That the test for admission to college shall be based (a) upon the ability to read, write, and speak the English language correctly and fluently; (b) upon a general knowledge of the life and growth of the English language and literature, to be vouched for by certificate or tested by set examination, and (c) upon a careful reading of not less than twenty selected books and an intensive study of not less than nine selected books; this work to be attested by nine essays or reviews based upon the books studied and presented under the teacher's certificate.

After a somewhat prolonged discussion the conference was divided up into three committees which were to consider, respectively, changes in and additions to the existing requirements, books to be included in the new lists, and the elucidation of the requirements. The reports of these committees were presented Tuesday morning, and after a discussion lasting through three sessions the following results were reached:

1. That the following sentence be inserted after the statement of the requirements for reading: "In preparation for this part of the requirement it is important that the candidate shall have been instructed in the fundamental principles of rhetoric."

2. That the following sentence be inserted after the statement of the requirements for study: "In addition the candidate may be required to answer questions involving the essentials of English grammar and on the leading facts in those periods of English literary history to which the prescribed books belong."

3. That a fixed list be adopted for 1901 and 1902.

4. That the list be composed as follows: For Study.—*Macbeth*, Burke's *Conciliation with America*, Macaulay's *Milton* and *Addison*, and *Milton's Minor Poems*, *Lycidas*, *Comus*, *L' Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*. For Reading.—*Ivanhoe*, *Pope's Iliad*, Books I, VI, XXII, XXIV; *The Sir Roger de Coverley Papers*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Princess*, *The Ancient Mariner*, *Silas Marner*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

This is substantially the list for 1900, with the substitution of *Milton's Minor Poems*, *The Ancient Mariner*, *Silas Marner*, and *The Merchant of Venice* for *Paradise Lost*, *Palamon and Arcite*, and *The Flight of a Tartar Tribe*.

The interpretation of requirements was discussed, but no action was taken.

The conference adjourned to meet in Philadelphia next December.

C. W. FRENCH